

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4910

INFO AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE

MEMBASSY BONN 0098

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LISBON

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AMEMBASSY LOURENCO MARQUES

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

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TAGS: SF, AO, PFOR

SUBJ: SAG RATIONALIZES ANGOLA INVOLVEMENT

1. SUMMARY: IN PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE THIS WEEK SOUTH
AFRICAN MINISTERS OF DEFENSE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS PRESENTED
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SAG RATIONALIZATION FOR INVOLVEMENT IN ANGOLA. ESSENTIAL

THRUST IS THAT SOUTH AFRICA ACTED IN DEFENSE OF FREE WORLD INTERESTS, HAS BEEN LET DOWN BY FAILURE OF WEST AND PARTICULARLY THE US TO RESPOND, AND IS NOW RETRENCHING TO PROTECT INTERESTS MORE CLEARLY AND UNIQUELY SOUTH AFRICAN. VIRTUALLY NO NEW DETAILS PROVIDED BY OFFICIAL PUBLIC STATEMENTS. END SUMMARY.

2. REPLYING JAN 26 TO THOSE PARTS OF OPPOSITION SPEECH DEALING WITH ANGOLA IN UP MOTION OF NO CONFIDENCE, MIN DEF BOTHA ADDED VERY LITTLE TO HIS PREVIOUS STATEMENTS. HE REPEATED THE THEME THAT SOUTH AFRICA HAD ACTED IN THE BROAD INTERESTS OF THE FREE WORLD BUT WAS NOT PREPARED TO CARRY THE BURDEN ALONE, AND STRESSED THAT SAG WOULD DEFEND ITS BORDERS AND INTERESTS, AND ALSO OTHER BORDERS AND INTERESTS FOR WHICH IT IS RESPONSIBLE, WITH ALL ITS STRENGTH. HE SAID NOTHING OF "WITHDRAWAL" BUT DID CONFIRM A DEEPER ANGOLAN INVOLVEMENT THAN HERETOFORE ADMITTED, SAYING (ACCORDING TO PRESS): "ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS THE DEFENSE FORCE HAD TO PURSUE THESE (TERRORIST) GANGS AND DESTROY THEIR CAMPS. THIS WAS DONE AND DONE WITH SUCCESS. WE WERE ON OCCASIONS INVOLVED IN OTHER FIGHTS AS WELL. MOST OF THESE WENT IN OUR FAVOR. I MIGHT MENTION THAT WE WERE INVOLVED IN THESE FIGHTS UNDER OUR OWN LEADERSHIP. IT WAS DONE TO PROTECT WHITE AND BLACK ANGOLANS FROM EXTERMINATION BY THE RUSSIANS AND CUBANS." BOTHA SAID THE DEFENCE FORCES HAD ACQUITTED THEMSELVES VERY WELL, PARTICULARLY THOSE TAKEN PRISONER.

3. BOTHA GAVE FOUR REASONS FOR SAG INVOLVEMENT: A. OVAMBO AND KAVANGO GOVERNMENTS EARLIER HAD ASKED SAG TO PARTICIPATE IN DEFENSE OF FRONTIER AREAS. WHEN SITUATION ON ANGOLA SIDE DETERIORATED LAST JULY AND AUGUST, SAG HAD TAKEN OVER PROTECTION OF IMPORTANT HYDROELECTRIC WORKS AT RUACANA AND CALUEQUE, AS WORKERS THERE REFUSED TO CONTINUE WORKING ON PROJECT WITHOUT SAG PROTECTION. B. REFUGEE INFLUX NECESSITATED ACTION TO PREVENT SOUTH WEST AFRICA FROM BEING OVERRUN BY THOSE FLEEING FROM NORTH. SAG PROVIDED AND OPERATED CAMPS IN SWA, PROVIDING FOOD, CLOTHING AND MEDICAL SERVICES. SAG ALSO PROVIDED "HUMANITARIAN SERVICES" SUPPORTING REFUGEES IN TWO CAMPS ACROSS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BORDER IN ANGOLA AS WELL. C. ATTACKS BY TERRORIST GANGS ACROSS BORDER FROM ANGOLA INTO SOUTH WEST REQUIRED DEFENSIVE AND PUNITIVE ACTIONS. D. MPLA, SUPPORTED BY SOVIETS AND CUBANS, HAD BEEN DEPLOYED UPON SOUTH AFRICA'S BORDERS. "IT IS CLEAR THAT ANGOLANS WOULD BE MURDERED AND THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE COUNTRY DESTROYED IN RUSSIA'S ATTEMPT TO ENSLAVE SOUTHERN AFRICA." BOTHA SAID IT WAS NOT YET TOO LATE. "FREE WORLD MUST STAND TOGETHER TO PRE-

VENT RUSSIAN INTERVENTION IN THE AFFAIRS OF AFRICA. FREE
WORLD CAN AND MUST WAKE UP OUT OF ITS DEATH SLEEP."

4. PRP LEADER EGLIN TERMED BOTHA'S REPLY INADEQUATE, SAID
SAG HAD NOT TAKEN ITS OWN PEOPLE INTO ITS CONFIDENCE NOR
TAKEN MEANINGFUL STEPS AT HOME TO WIN THE LOYALTY OF ALL OF
THE POPULATION, AND THAT WHATEVER IT HAD HOPED TO ACHIEVE
IN ANGOLA HAD OBVIOUSLY COME TO NAUGHT. STRESSING HE
HAD NO DOUBT ABOUT ITS MOTIVES AND OBJECTIVES, HE CHARGED
SAG WITH MISCALCULATION AND FAULTY JUDGMENT. EGLIN SAID
SAG MIGHT HAVE THOUGHT A MILITARY STALEMATE WOULD HAVE
BEEN OBTAINED AT LESS COST, AND THAT A STALEMATE WOULD
ASSIST IN PRODUCING POLITICAL COMPROMISES AMONG RIVAL
ANGOLA FACTIONS. HE SAID SAG HAD MISJUDGED ATTITUDES IN
US ON ANGOLA ISSUE. IT HAD PERHAPS MISTAKENLY ASSUMED THAT
SIGNS OR ASSURANCES FROM SOME QUARTERS OF THE US
REPRESENTED THE PREDOMINANT AMERICAN WILL. EGLIN THOUGHT
IT A SERIOUS ERROR TO ABANDON ESTABLISHED SAG POLICY OF
NON-INTERVENTION IN AFFAIRS OF OTHERS.

5. FONMIN MULLER REPLIED INDIRECTLY BY SAYING THAT SAG
AIM HAD BEEN LIMITED TO PROVIDING TIME AND OPPORTUNITY FOR
ANGOLA TO SOLVE ITS OWN PROBLEMS AND FOR
FREE WORLD TO
CORRECTLY IDENTIFY SITUATION AS MAJOR SOVIET THRUST IN
FRAMEWORK OF WORLD COMMUNIST STRATEGY. HE SAID SAG HAD
EXTENSIVE CONSULTATIONS WITH AFRICAN STATES AND WITH OTHER
STATES, (IMPLYING BUT NOT SAYING THAT SAG ACTIONS MIGHT
HAVE BEEN PART OF BROADER SCHEMA). MULLER THOUGHT SOVIETS
HAD TIMED THEIR INTERVENTION VERY WELL, CATCHING US IN
THROES OF VIET NAM AND WATERGATE BACKLASH AND IN ELECTION
YEAR. HE STILL HOPED WEST AND FREE WORLD WOULD AWAKE TO
GLOBAL IMPLICATIONS OF WHAT SOVIETS AND CUBANS DOING IN
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ANGOLA. FONMIN SAID SAG HAD ACTUALLY EXPANDED CONTACTS
WITH AFRICAN STATES AS CONSEQUENCE OF ANGOLA PROBLEM,
AND THAT MANY IN AFRICA NOW SAW SAG AS RELIABLE PARTNER,
THUS FURTHERING GENERAL AIMS OF DETENTE POLICY.

6. ENGLISH AND TO SOME EXTENT EVEN THE
AFRIKAANS PRESS,
AS WELL AS THE OPPOSITION PARTIES, CONTINUE TO FRET AT SAG
FAILURE TO GIVE MORE INFORMATION TO PUBLIC. AFRIKAANS
PAPERS IN PARTICULAR HAVE DRAWN INFERENCE THAT SOUTH AFRICA
PLAYED SOME KIND OF ROLE IN CONCERT WITH FREE WORLD AND
WAS NOT SUPPORTED. DIE BURGER NOTED THAT SOUTH AFRICA
"DID NOT ON HER OWN, WITH CLOSED EYES, CHARGE INTO A DANGER
AREA...(SAG) CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO DO MORE THAN HER SHARE
WOULD HAVE BEEN WITHIN A BROADER SET UP." SABC EDITORI-

ALIZED THAT SAG HAD ACTED
TO GIVE FREE WORKD TIME TO
INTERVENE MEANINGFULLY IN OPPOSITION TO SOVIET AND CUBAN
ATTEMPTS TO CREATE A SATELLITE STATE. IT HAD BECOME CLEAR
THAT FOR VARIETY OF REASONS WEST AND PARTICULARLY US WAS
NOT PREPARED TO ACT DECISIVELY. SAG HAD NOW DECIDED TO
CONCENTRATE EFFORTS ON DEFENDING BORDERS AND INTERESTS FOR
WHICH IT RESPONSIBLE.

7. COMMENT: NOTION THAT WEST LET SAG DOWN SEEMS WIDELY
ACCEPTED AND IS REFLECTED IN BITTERNESS TOWARD US WE HAVE
SENSED INDEECENT CONTACTS WITH SAG OFFICIALS AND PRIVATE
SOUTH AFRICANS. ACTUAL DEPTH OF SAG INVOLVEMENT MAY WELL
HAVE COME ABOUT THROUGH MISCALCULATION OF EFFORT
REQUIRED TO PRODUCE MILITARY STALEMATE AND POSSIBILITY OF
POLITICAL COMPROMISE, OR IN WISHFUL HOPE THAT US
SUPPORT FOR FNLA AND UNITA MEANT WEST WAS PREPARED TO
MATCH AND COUNTER WHATEVER SOVIETS MIGHT DO. IN ANY CASE,
THERE IS A GOOD DEAL OF TREPEDITION ABOUT THE POLITICAL
AND ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF WHAT LOOKS TO MANY SOUTH
AFRICANS LIKE A SOVIET AND CUBAN BACKED SEIGE OF SOUTHERN
AFRICA, WATCHED BY AN INDIFFERENT WESTERN AUDIENCE. NO
ONE HERE HAS OFFERED CHALLENGE TO DECLARED SAG INTENTION
TO STAND FIRM, STILL IN ANGOLA, TO DEFEND INTERESTS IN
RUACANA AND CALUEQUE HYDROELECTRIC SCHEME.
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